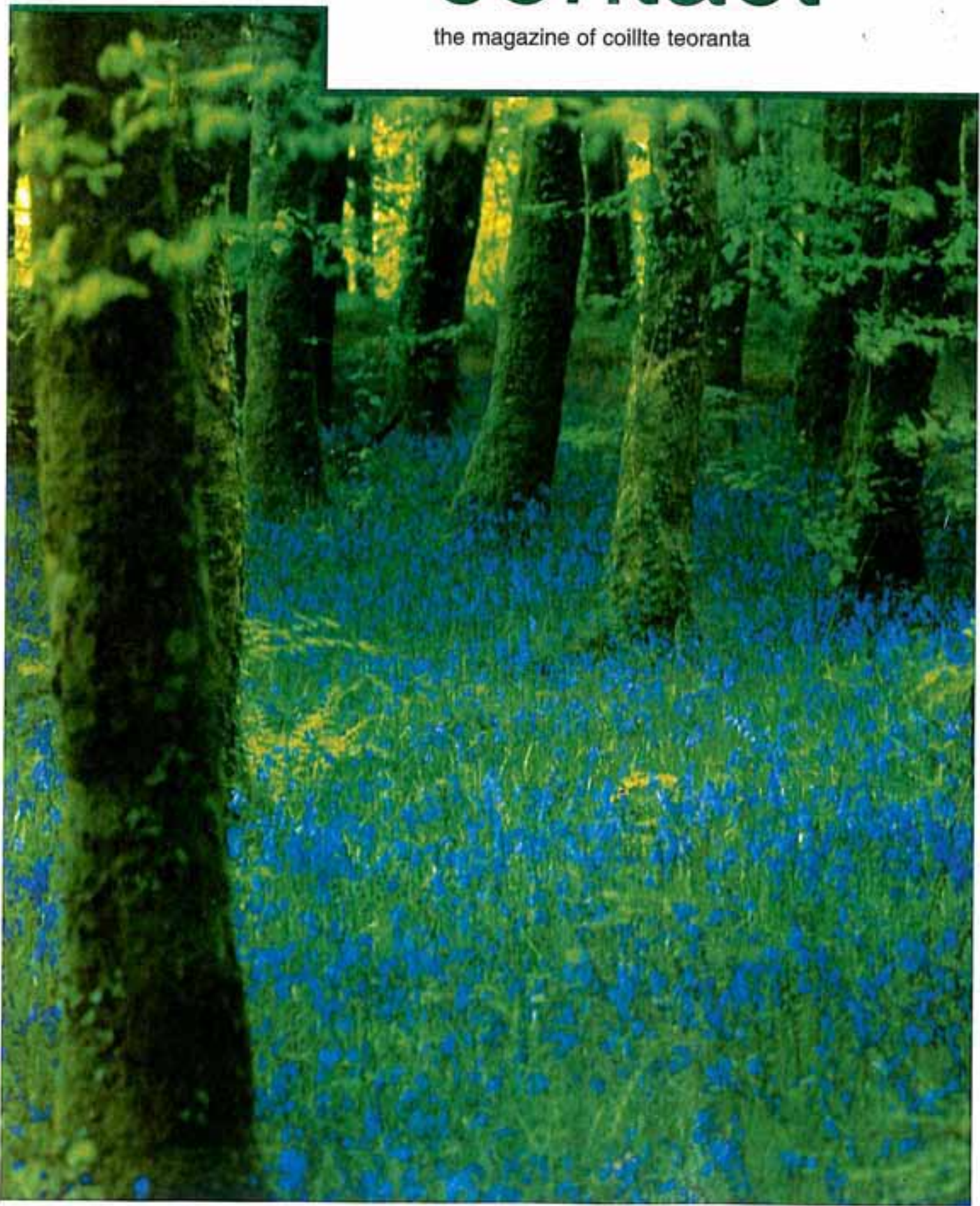


coillte contact

volume 15, number 1, 2003

the magazine of coillte teoranta



Busy times ahead for the LIFE Project Team

The LIFE Project Team has been very busy since this EU-funded project was approved in July of last year (see Autumn 2002 Issue for more details)! And indeed, they are set for a busy summer. As you know, this project focuses on the restoration and conservation of over 1,200 hectares of blanket bog across 14 sites in Coillte's ownership, located mainly along the western seaboard.

Progress to date includes:

- The visiting by Coillte and Dúchas staff, to a similar EU-funded LIFE project in England, and the development of good links between both project teams,
- The commencement of consultation procedures with Dúchas in relation to their management plans for relevant SAC's. Most of the 14 blanket bog sites are located in SAC's, and Coillte is obliged to consult with Dúchas in advance of any planned management activity proposed for sites located within SAC's,
- The completion of a training programme for site managers,
- The application and receipt of a number of limited felling licences,
- The installation of dams on some of the sites. The purpose of these dams is to restore, as much as possible, the hydrological characteristics of an intact blanket bog. This work will continue into the summer and beyond,
- The selection of sites to monitor nutrient flow,
- The installation of display signs on some demonstration sites,
- The construction of a car park at the Slieve Bloom site,
- The communication of the objectives of the LIFE project at Coillte District meetings, and with representatives from third level colleges, major sawmills, and An Taisce.

Public Relations is a key aspect of the project and in this regards, an official launch of the project will take place in early summer to coincide with major operational work having started. It is also planned to have a number of mini-launches on the five demonstration sites that will be designed to have a particular focus on public awareness through demonstration days, interpretation and boardwalk access.

In addition, a dedicated project website is planned, and will be developed in the next couple of months (background information on the project is currently available on the Coillte website). A project brochure has been developed also and will shortly be distributed to Coillte staff and other stakeholders such as NGO's, academic institutions and relevant public authorities.

The Project Team are very satisfied with the progress that has been made to date. Indeed, so are the EU! On the 5th of March, representatives of the European Commission's LIFE Unit (DG-Environment) met with the Project Management Group in HQ, to review progress on the project to date. This involved a comprehensive presentation by Project Team and a detailed and very helpful discussion on issues arising. The LIFE Unit representatives indicated that they were very encouraged and impressed that project management systems were in place and that a good start had been made to implementing the project.

Caroline White
Kevin Donnellan



Coillte and Dúchas meet with the UK LIFE Project Team in Kielder, England



The LIFE Project Team examine existing drains in preparation for blocking them

Peatlandnews

Celebrating boglands

SPRING 2003



Portach

Special pull-out feature
for young readers

Saving the Patterned Lands

Restoring blanket bog habitat

ISSN 0791- 2757

Saving the Patterned Lands

On the 15th June 1919, the first non-stop powered flight across the Atlantic ended, nose down in Derryglina Bog near Clifden in Co. Galway. The cool, moist westerlies that helped Alcock and Brown to achieve this historic crossing and earn their place in the Guinness Book of Records, do more than carry intrepid aviators to the western shores of Europe - they play a major role in the development of our world famous blanket bogs.

After the westerlies have completed their 6,500km journey from the eastern seaboard of America, they carry enough moisture to produce rain on 2 out of 3 days in the West of Ireland. The Gulf Stream also has a role in moderating our climate, ensuring cool temperatures throughout the year. This climate, coupled with a geology of hard, acidic rocks, produces landscapes which are swamped by a type of peatland known as blanket bog.

Blanket bog is so called because its development which, on average, takes 4,000 years is mostly independent of basins or topographical features where water collects;

it simply covers the landscape like a blanket. Peat develops due to a continuous supply of water from rainfall, maintaining waterlogged conditions on the ground. Blanket bogs are ombrotrophic or rain fed, and as a result their pH is acidic.

The greatest area of blanket bog in the world occurs in Ireland, along the western seaboard and in mountainous areas throughout the country. But Scotland can claim the largest single expanse of blanket bog in the world in Cairnness and Sutherland. The RSPB nature reserve at Forsinard lies in the heart of this area and is open to visitors.

The blanket bogs are home to some of the rarest and most beautiful nesting birds such as the elegant red-throated diver, the mysterious common scoter and the evocative greenhanks and golden plovers. The plant life is equally diverse and includes specialists like the wonderful sundew which use their red sticky tentacles to attract, trap and devour unwary insects. The complex patterns formed by the myriad of small pools are a real feature of the peatlands but their

lifeblood lies in the *Sphagnum* mosses, which act as a permanent sponge, forming a colourful carpet across this unique landscape area.

For centuries, the peatlands have remained largely intact thanks to generations of traditional management such as grazing for sheep and cattle, turf cutting and sporting. In recent times, however, extensive areas have been significantly damaged by drainage and forest planting, threatening not only the special wildlife but also the fragile peatland habitat itself.

In recognition of the importance of blanket bogs, two independent projects funded by the European Union LIFE programme are currently underway in Ireland and Scotland to help restore areas of blanket bog damaged by drainage and forestry during the 1970's and 1980's. The LIFE Peatlands Project of North Scotland 2001-2005 aims to restore priority areas of damaged bog and agree on a vision for their future management with all interested parties. This project involves five partners: RSPB, Forestry Commission, Plantlife, Forest Enterprise and



Bog moss has spongy roots that allow it to breathe underwater.



The peatlands are the headquarters for the beautiful Greenshank.



Utricularia - plants being used as a library habitat.



Stags as fit as the females are an important part of the peatland habitat.



From the air blanket bog surfaces are highly patterned due to the myriad of small lakes and pools that occur on them. Other habitats present include flushed fens, wetland holes, hummocks and ridges. These varied habitats contribute to the wonderful diversity of species of plant, animal and bird found in blanket bogs.



The rare Red-throated Diver - 1,200-1,500 breeding pairs in Scotland. In Ireland less than 10 pairs breed in bogs in west Donegal.

Scottish Natural Heritage

Restoring Active Blanket Bog in Ireland 2002-2006 is a major initiative of Coillte Teoranta. It involves some 1,200ha of blanket bog in 14 sites, all of which have been designated as Special Areas of Conservation.

A key part of both projects will be the removal of trees from the bogland and the installation of literally thousands of dams to block drains, in a bid to restore the

integrity of the bog's hydrological systems. An additional element of the Irish project is fencing to control grazing on areas of unplanted bogland within the project sites.

Both projects aim to raise the profile of blanket bogs and to encourage people to visit these wonderful areas. In due course Coillte will be providing awareness programmes for members of the public on five of its sites around the country.

The RSPB reserve at Forsinard in Scotland, one the LIFE Peatlands Project is well worth a visit and can be reached by train from Inverness or Wick. Get off at Forsinard Station right next to the reserve Visitor Centre and the Daibh Lochan Trail over the blanket bog. Contact forsinard@rspb.org.uk

Further Information

Scotland: www.lifepeatlandsproject.com
Ireland: www.coillte.ie

Blanket Bogs Word Search Competition

The six images shown on these pages are from a postcard pack produced to celebrate and promote the peatlands of Cairnness and Sutherland in Scotland. Thanks to the LIFE Peatlands Project Partners, IPCC have five sets of the stunning postcards to give away as prizes to the lucky winners of our word search competition. Solve the 10 clues below, then highlight your answers in the grid. Cut it out and send it to IPCC by 2nd May 2003 to be in with a chance to win a postcard set.

- Most extensive peatland type in Ireland and Scotland (7, 3)
- Carnivorous plant of bogs (6)
- Spongy moss forming a living layer on the bog surface (8)
- Type of drainage hole found in blanket bogs (7)
- Largest mammal grazing blanket bogs (3, 4)
- Type of climate essential for blanket bog development (4, 3)
- The EU funding programme contributing to the restoration of blanket bogs in Ireland and Scotland (4)
- Traditional tool used to cut turf (5)
- The pH of a blanket bog (4)
- Device used to block drains on blanket bogs (3)

By sending these postcards you can play a part in promoting blanket bogs and encouraging people to visit these wonderful areas.

Here are the clues:

- Most extensive peatland type in Ireland and Scotland (7, 3)
- Carnivorous plant of bogs (6)
- Spongy moss forming a

A B C M U N G A H P S
D E F G H I T J K G L
L M N O P E Q R O L E
S T U V W X B Y I A
Z A W L B C T D E F N
F G O S R E E D D E R
H O L U K I J K L M N
C O L N P Q D R S T U
V W A D I C A X Y Z A
B L W E C D M E F G H
B I S W J K S L M N O

Send your entries to: IPCC,
119 Capel Street Dublin 1
by Friday 2nd May 2003

Name: _____

Address: _____

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volume 15, number 3, 2003

*C/ Dúpla - Mates iol
Life*

the magazine of coillte teoranta



Stakeholder Field Day held on Environmental Aspects of Forest Management

On August 13th Coillte hosted an information day on the Environmental Aspects of Forest Management for its stakeholders. The day was organised by Patricia Flanagan and hosted by Sean Quealy, Pacellí Breathnach and Kevin Donnellan. Letters of invitation were sent to over 150 stakeholders inviting them to attend an information day which was held in the Training Centre in Mountrath.

The first part of the day involved a presentation by Sean Quealy on policies and practices in Coillte in relation to:

- Consultation
- Biodiversity
- Landscape planning
- Continuous cover forestry
- Riparian zone management
- Woodland ecology
- Forestry and water quality
- Monitoring deadwood in the Coillte Forest estate
- Forests and bird diversity
- LIFE Nature Raised Bog Project: Kevin Donnellan

Lunch was provided in the form of a barbeque on site prepared by the Training Centre staff. This, aside

from being a low cost option, provided an informal forum for participants to stand around and network both with each other and with the Coillte staff in attendance.

In the afternoon, a tour of a reforestation site was given by Sean Quealy showing practical examples of issues which had been presented at the morning session. In addition, participants were taken to a LIFE site in the Slieve Blooms on which work has commenced on the restoration of a bog.

Ten people attended the day from a wide range of backgrounds: Helena McGorman, Irish Landscape Institute and Dublin City Council; Ailish Feeley, Mote Park Group; Noel Feeley, IFCI and Mote Park Group; Stephen Nealon, Western Region Fisheries Board; Christina Lundy, Western Region Fisheries Board; Damien Brennan, North West Tourism; Jane Coman, Crann; Michaela Kirrane, Eastern Region Fisheries Board; Brendan O'Hea, Marine Institute; and Grainne O'Brien, FAS.

The day was very worthwhile and those in attendance expressed their pleasant surprise at the level of consideration given to environmental issues in forest management.

Patricia Flanagan



At the Stakeholder Field Day on Environmental Aspects of Forest Management in August were (left to right): Ailish Feeley, Mote Park Conservation Group; Jane Coman, Crann; Helena McGorman, Irish Landscape Institute and Dublin City Council; Christina Lundy, Western Region Fisheries Board; Stephen Nealon, Western Region Fisheries Board; and Michaela Kirrane, Eastern Region Fisheries Board

International Seed Federation Conference – Ireland 2003

The 2003 meeting of the Tree and Shrub Seed Group of the International Seed Federation (ISF) was hosted by Coillte Nurseries and was held in Carlow from August 28th to September 1st. Delegates from over 20 countries including Canada, China, Russia, the Czech Republic, Poland, USA and most European Union countries attended this year's meeting. Most members arrived on Thursday 28th August to a cocktail reception in the Seven Oaks Hotel. The Annual General Meeting of the group was held on Friday August 29th and the Chairperson, Mr Arie Boeve from Holland, officially opened the conference. New members from Belgium and USA were welcomed to the meeting.

The problems that had arisen with the implementation of the new EU Directive 1999/105/EC were the main focus of the meeting. This Directive covers all EU countries and applies to the production and marketing of species that are important for a range of forestry purposes including the production of wood. It is primarily concerned with ensuring that seed, cuttings, and young plants used for forestry purposes are selected from vigorous high quality trees. Species that are important for forestry in Ireland are now included in this Directive such as ash, alder, birch, sycamore, cherry and lodgepole pine. There was general agreement that these difficulties were largely due to the different systems that were being adopted by the various countries for forwarding the required information and in particular the master certificate number. Standard master certificate numbers which could

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A visit to a LIFE Site

Coillte Contact recently paid a visit to Emlaghdauroe, one of the sites selected for restoration under the EU LIFE-Nature Programme (see Spring 2003 edition for more details on the LIFE project).

Emlaghdauroe is situated in arguably the most scenic part of Connemara, the 12 Bens. Specifically, it is located at the foot of Ben Glenisky, on the main Galway to Clifden Road, and overlooking the world famous Roundstone Bog. The site, while not located within a SAC, is surrounded by SAC. In addition, it is considered to be a highly sensitive area from a visual point-of-view. All these factors resulted in this site being selected for restoration under the LIFE-Nature Programme.



Water-level gauges have been installed across the site

The site in question is just over 90 hectares in size, almost 80% of which is planted. The predominant species is lodgepole pine, although there are small pockets of Sitka spruce located throughout the plantation. All trees were planted in 1976.

Approximately two years ago, an ecological survey was conducted at Emlaghdauroe as part of the application process for LIFE-Nature funding. The survey showed that while the planted area had low ecological value, the unplanted area had high ecological value and was considered to be a good example of montane heath habitat, which is a relatively rare habitat in Ireland. Based on the results of this survey, a series of nature conservation objectives were formulated and a work programme



Water quality is being monitored downstream of the site using an autosampler

identified. The work programme varies among all 14 sites in the LIFE Project. One of the aims of the LIFE Nature Programme is to encourage the use of different restoration treatments at different sites where possible, so that a strong element of learning is incorporated into the ecological work, and that over time, the best possible ecological restoration methods can be developed for specific habitats.

The work programme at Emlaghdauroe includes:

- clearfell of all timber
- removal of most timber from site
- chipping of some of the remaining timber and spreading of chips on site
- felling to waste of small portion of timber on poorer parts of the site
- blocking of drains to return bog to natural hydrological state using recycled plastic piling
- monitoring water levels on site using specially designed gauges
- monitoring of water quality downstream throughout duration of project
- ongoing assessment of ground vegetation to measure effectiveness of restoration measures above. Part of this process will examine levels of natural regeneration of lodgepole pine. A strategy may need to be developed for their removal if levels of natural regeneration are significant.

Work is well underway on the project at Emlaghdauroe. Timber removal began

in mid-April following the construction of a forest road and the installation of water-level gauges. Some felling to waste has happened, but most of the timber removed to date (early June) has been dispatched to ECC in Galway and SmartPly in Waterford. At the time of going to print, a chipping machine was due to arrive shortly. A sophisticated water monitoring station (called an Autosampler) was also installed downstream of the site prior to any operations commencing and water quality has been continuously monitored since and will continue to be on an ongoing basis. Drain blocking is due to commence at the end of June.



Drains will be blocked using recycled plastic piling

It is expected that harvesting will take place over a 2-year period. Already, significant increases in water levels have been observed in the water-level gauges as a result of the timber removed from the site to date. Further increases in water levels are expected as clearfelling progresses and drains are blocked, which will in turn encourage the return of flora common to wet blanket bog habitats.

This project is one of the most exciting ones that *Coillte* has engaged in to date, and it is great to see some tangible progress on the ground. It will certainly be every exciting to see the results of future ground vegetation surveys as the bog returns to its natural state. *Coillte Contact* will keep readers up-to-date on progress on the LIFE Project over coming issues.

Máirín Delaney
John J. Kelly
Kevin Donnellan

Stakeholder Field Day a success

Coillte's first stakeholder field day for 2003 took place on June 4th, and was well attended by various stakeholders. The first of these days took place in association with the European Green Days initiative as part of Green Week 2003, an initiative run by Environment DG of the European Commission.

The day began with a visit to Belleek Woodlands near Ballina in Co. Mayo. Much work has been conducted recently in this wood thanks to the Neighbourwood Scheme, which is a project that is sponsored by the Forest Service of the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, in partnership with Coillte and the local community group, the Belleek Woodland Enhancement Committee. This 78-hectare woodland of Belleek is located on the outskirts of Ballina town in County Mayo. Because of the proximity of this woodland to the town, it has been used as a recreational resource by the local community for many years. Over time, however, this woodland became neglected, through the over-use of the park and the lack of funding to maintain this amenity resource to its original standard. In 1999, Coillte approached the residents of Belleek and Farnoo with a proposal to establish a community-based approach to managing this resource into the future. What once was primarily a production forest is now being transformed into a sustainable recreational resource through the concerted effort of both Coillte and the local community. Joint management plans for Belleek have been developed, and funding has been secured to conduct the work outlined in the plan. Since then, more than 22,000 trees of 14 different species have been planted, over 90% of which were broadleaves. Three forest avenues, five stone walls, a lime-kiln, and a number of stone bridges have already been restored. The picnic area by the river Moy has been re-created and all furniture and signage has been replaced. In addition, a



Stakeholders and Coillte staff pictured at Eskeragh LIFE site



The Picnic area by the river Moy has now been fully restored

monument to the original landlords of Belleek Estate has been fully restored. Future plans include upgrading of other walks, and restoration of other buildings and monuments on the estate. In addition, conifers that will be felled in the future will be replaced by broadleaves.

In the afternoon, the group travelled to Eskeragh blanket bog to hear background, actions and events planned for the EU-funded Life-Nature Blanket Bog Restoration project which is currently being progressed by Coillte at 14 sites throughout the company. Raised bogs and blanket bogs are priority restoration habitats for Coillte, as

they are listed as priority habitats for conservation under the EU Habitats Directive. In 2001, Coillte lodged an application for EU funding under the LIFE-Nature Programme, to implement peatland restoration work on blanket bog habitats on Coillte's land. In 2002, approval was given to restore 1,212 hectares of blanket bog on 14 sites, located mostly in Co. Mayo. These sites have been impacted by afforestation, drainage and/or grazing and lie within, or adjacent to proposed Special Areas of Conservation.

Two more field days will be organised in 2003 and Coillte Contact hope to bring you reports on these days.

Patricia Flanagan



Country / Pays:

Themes / Thèmes:

Category / Catégorie:

After / après: and before / et avant:

Including the word/ Incluant le mot:

Matching event(s) / Événements correspondants : (1-9) parmi 9

- St John's Wood -a guided walk**
 St John's Wood , Lough Ree, County Roscommon , Ireland (IRL) Date: 31/05/2003
 Contact: podonnell@duchas.ie
 Sorties de terrain / Walks - Green Days / Green Days
- 'NATURESCAPES'**
 The Pumphouse, Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, North Slob, Wexford (IRL) Date: 31/05/2003
 Contact: cwilson@duchas.ie
 Exposition / Exhibit - Green Days / Green Days
- Civic Offices Water Conservation project**
 Dublin City Council Civic Offices (IRL) Date: 03/06/2003
 Contact: emma.heskin@codema.ie
 Exposition / Exhibit - Green Days / Green Days
- Bog walk**
 Gannivegil Bog (IRL) Date: 04/06/2003
 Contact: emagee@duchas.ie
 Sorties de terrain / Walks - Green Days / Green Days
- Green Day Event**
 Co. Mayo (IRL) Date: 04/06/2003
 Contact: Caroline White at 003537162663
 Education / Educational event - Green Days / Green Days
- Seashore Walk**
 Maghery, Dungloe (IRL) Date: 05/06/2003
 Contact: emagee@duchas.ie
 Sorties de terrain / Walks - Green Days / Green Days
- Seashore Walk**
 Cruit Strand, the Rosses (IRL) Date: 06/06/2003
 Contact: emagee@duchas.ie
 Sorties de terrain / Walks - Green Days / Green Days
- Corlea Bog Centre / Display**
 Corlea Bog Centre (IRL) Date: 07/06/2003
 Contact: smoles@ealga.ie
 Exposition / Exhibit - Green Days / Green Days
- Nature Walk**
 Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough (IRL) Date: 08/06/2003
 Contact: smoles@ealga.ie
 Sorties de terrain / Walks - Green Days /

coillte

Annual Report & Accounts 2003



growing



sustaining



developing



Estate Management

In 2003, a new code of practice for forest inventory was fully implemented. This code will improve efficiency and consistency in the measurement and collection of forest data and enhance data quality and integrity.

During the year, Coillte finalised a species strategy for the next forest rotation. This strategy, which complies with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and other forest management standard requirements, identified the use of improved Sitka spruce of Washington and Oregon provenances as a key element in protecting and improving the productivity of the estate. The strategy also sets out measures to increase the area of broadleaved forests to 10% of Coillte's estate.

2003 was one of the worst years on record for forest fires, with a total of 420 hectares of forests burned. Coillte also initiated a campaign with local authorities to combat illegal dumping in its forests.

A review of procedures for the administration of game and deer shooting lettings was initiated. A draft plan was developed for the management of areas where red grouse hunting is permitted. Coillte also initiated work on a policy for the safe use of firearms on its estate, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Deer Alliance, An Garda Síochána, and the Army.

Forest Certification

Coillte's forests have been certified as being well managed in accordance with strict environmental, social and economic criteria, by the internationally-recognised FSC since May 2001.

In 2003 the Group retained FSC certification, following the annual surveillance audit in April. The implementation of strategies to address conditions identified by the auditors continues to be a priority for the Group.

Recreation

Coillte provides leisure and recreation benefits to local communities and visitors through its *Open Forest Policy*. Coillte offers free pedestrian access to all forests; 11 dedicated forest parks; over 150 recreation areas with facilities such as car parking and picnic sites; access routes to many upland areas; and two sculpture trails. 19 way-marked routes also traverse Coillte land. In 2003, Coillte initiated a detailed review of its recreation policy, the first stage of which involved wide-scale consultation with user groups, tourism interests, local authorities, statutory bodies and other stakeholders. This review will be completed during 2004.

EU LIFE-Nature Projects

In 2002, Coillte secured support from the EU, under the LIFE-Nature programme, for a four-year project entitled *Restoring Active Blanket Bogs in Ireland*. In 2003, restoration work began on 12 blanket bogs located mainly in the western counties. Work varied among sites and included felling of timber, blocking of drains, monitoring of water quality and ecological surveys.

Further applications for funding were submitted to the EU-LIFE Nature Programme during 2003 for projects involving the conservation and enhancement of raised bogs and alluvial woodlands.

Carolee White

coillte

Social & Environmental Report 2003

planning

conserving

managing



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www.fsc.org

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FSC is a global leader in the world of responsible forestry.

Special Feature Coillte's plan to protect the lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

Of the nine species of bat that are resident in Ireland, the lesser horseshoe bat* is one of the rarest. The lesser horseshoe bat needs forest and woodland habitat in order to survive. Because they have a weak echolocation (or navigation) system, lesser horseshoe bats need to have landscape structures such as trees, woodlands, walls and hedgerows in order to be able to find their way around and hunt for food. The decline in this species that has been seen across its European range (it has become extinct in parts of central Europe) can be partly attributed to loss of forest and woodland habitat.

While the protection of the lesser horseshoe bat requires broad landscape measures that go beyond the forest boundaries, Coillte, as a major forest owner, has a very positive contribution to make to the long-term conservation of this species and aims to support national conservation efforts to conserve this mammal.

* The lesser horseshoe bat is so-called because it has a horseshoe-shaped ear (called a noseleaf) around its nostrils.



Special Feature Progress on restoration of Blanket Bogs

In mid-2002, the EU LIFE-Nature Programme approved funding for Coillte to restore 1,212 ha of blanket bog on 14 sites located mostly in the north, northwest and midlands. The sites in this project have been impacted by afforestation, drainage, and grazing, and are within or adjacent to proposed Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). In 2002 Coillte prepared management plans for each site in consultation with the NPWS, the Forest Service, Fisheries Boards and other experts, and proceeded to implement the plans, which included water quality monitoring, vegetation monitoring, installing water-level gauges, removing naturally-regenerating conifers, and blocking drains using plastic piping.

By the end of 2003, work had commenced on all sites, and attention focused on felling trees on some sites to aid the bog restoration process. Trees felled in this manner were either left on site to decompose naturally, removed for sale as commercial timber, or chipped on site. Good progress was also made in blocking drains on both cleared and open bogs, fencing areas to control overgrazing by cattle and sheep, and removal of self-seeded trees from the open blanket bogs. Recovery is already



evident at a number of sites with bog plants such as *Molinia caerulea* and *Calluna vulgaris* returning. The table below summarises progress for 2003.

Five sites were also developed for educational purposes and will ultimately feature public information and access facilities including boardwalks. The first boardwalk was completed at the Slieve Bloom site by the end of 2003, and planning was well underway for the construction of three further boardwalks at Emlaghdaun, Co. Galway, Eskeragh, Co. Mayo and Craighonagh, Co. Donegal. Further information is available at www.irishbogrestorationproject.ie

Operational Progress on LIFE Sites by end of 2003

RESTORATION TECHNIQUES	ACHIEVED (ha)
Felling to waste	232.1
Felling and chipping	4.2
Commercial tree felling	25.0
Blocking drains	267.1
Fencing	273.1

Nursery Industry and the extreme difficulties it currently faces due to proposed cut backs in grant aided planting. The industry has been producing some 67 million plants on an annual basis and employs up to 500 people at peak times of the year. It has already experienced falls in sales to grant aided planting of almost 30% over the last two years. If the proposed afforestation programme of 2,000 hectares for 2003/04 becomes reality then it will signal the virtual end of the forest nursery industry - particularly of the private sector - it was impossible for an industry to be expected to operate in a commercial fashion with a "stop-go" approach to planning when a three to four year lead-in was required for plant production planning.

Pat Donnellan, local Nursery Manager, then led the group through the plant production process. The entire life cycle for seed sowing to seedling production, transplanting and then finally lifting and grading for sale was explained. The importance of traceability from seed source to final product was highlighted, as was the importance of plant yield to production costs. Details were given of various research programmes currently underway to both improve plant quality and make plant production more environmentally sustainable. Dr. David Thompson informed the group of the obvious benefits of tree improvement programmes - particularly that for Sitka spruce. He highlighted the significant differences between potential production and tree quality for various provenances of Sitka spruce. The potential economic benefits were so great that Coillte was making a policy decision to plant far greater proportions of Washington and Oregon provenances in the future. A substantial proportion of this would be of improved sources, leading to greater productivity and better timber quality.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programme

Members are reminded to submit attendance sheets to the Sligo office for any CPD events they may have attended. Attendance sheets are available from the Society website www.societyofirishforesters.ie or from the office.

Coillte Blanket Bog Restoration Project

In 2002 Coillte embarked on an important blanket bog restoration project. This project is jointly funded by Coillte and DG-Environment under the EU LIFE-Nature Programme. It is a four-year project, the primary aim of which is to achieve restoration of blanket bog habitat within 1,212 hectares of land owned by Coillte. Active blanket bog is listed as a priority habitat for conservation in Annex 1 of the E.U. Habitats Directive and the areas concerned either lie within or occur adjacent to proposed Special Areas of Conservation. A total of 14 blanket bog sites, most of which are located along the western seaboard of Ireland, have been selected for restoration.

Many of the sites within the project contain significant areas of blanket bog vegetation which occur either in unplanted areas or in areas where trees have been planted but have not achieved a closed-canopy. The main plant species to grow in these areas of blanket bog habitat are generally purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), cross-leaved heather (*Erica tetralix*), bog-cotton (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and various Sphagnum mosses. A number of

the sites included in the project contain substantial tracts of unplanted, open blanket bog which have suffered from erosion recently. This erosion has led to the presence of large areas of bare peat and the remaining sparse bog vegetation is generally degraded to a species-poor grass heath dominated by mat grass (*Nardus stricta*). Significant portions of these areas will be fenced off from grazing animals in order to aid the recovery of the bog vegetation and thus enhance peat stability.

Any active drains within the site areas will be dammed, by hand, using interlocking plastic piling dams. This blocking of the main drains will have the effect of slowing water movement and thus reducing water loss. This reduction in the rate of water loss will, in turn, lead to an elevation of water levels in the surrounding blanket bog areas. The damming of drains will be carried out to varying extents at all sites and the changes in water levels within the peat will be assessed using a number of Water Level Range Gauges (WaLRaGs). If a blanket bog surface is dry it may be prone to colonisation from conifers seeding in from adjacent areas of plantation. In such areas there is generally a low density of trees present and, as a result, these trees can be removed by manual felling. At most of the sites there are areas of conifer plantation which are small in stature either due to their young age or due to poor growth rates. As a result of the trees in these areas not having achieved a closed canopy, there is usually a high cover of bog vegetation, mostly dominated by either purple moor-grass or ling heather. The trees in these areas will be either felled and left on site or felled and chipped. Where possible, the trunks of these felled/chipped trees will be placed in the drains in order to impede water movement. The prospects for the recovery of bog vegetation in these areas are good. In some areas which are currently under closed canopy of tall conifers the timber will be extracted by commercial harvesting methods. Trees will be removed and afterwards the ground surface will be covered with a mixture of wide brush mats and areas with a patchy cover of brush left over after harvesting. As there is generally little bog vegetation remaining in these areas it is anticipated that recovery of bog vegetation will be slow, especially in the short term.

Work is underway on many of the sites and includes timber harvesting, water quality monitoring, vegetation monitoring, installation of water level gauges, removal of naturally regenerated conifers and the blocking of drains using recycled plastic piling. The efficacy of these various restoration measures will be monitored over the lifetime of the project. Vegetation changes will be monitored by means of permanent plots which will be assessed at regular intervals. The quality and quantity of water in streams which flow out of felled areas is also being monitored at a number of locations.

For more information visit the project website at www.irishbogrestorationproject.ie.

There are still a number of members who have not paid their 2003 subs, and a lesser number who have not paid for both 2002 & 2003 - these accounts must be settled immediately with the Society office.

TIGERCAT TIMBER & FORESTRY

September/October 2003 Volume 12 No.5

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The Restoration of Blanket Bog

By Dr. John Conaghan, Environmental Consultancy, Galway



Typical flora found on a bog

In 2002 Coillte embarked on a major bog restoration project. This is jointly funded by Coillte and DG-Environment under the EU LIFE-Nature Programme. This is a four-year project, the primary aim of which is the restoration of blanket bog habitat within 1,212 hectares of land. Active blanket bog is listed as a priority habitat for conservation in Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive and the areas concerned either lie within or occur adjacent to proposed Special Areas of Conservation. A total of 14 blanket bog sites have been selected for restoration. Most of these occur along the western seaboard of the country with six in Co. Mayo, two in Co. Donegal, two in Co. Kerry and one each in counties Galway, Sligo, Clare and Offaly.

Typical sites range from areas of upland blanket bog to blanket bog areas affected by salt, erosion over large areas of blanket bog causes a variety of environmental problems when peat soils near rivers and lakes. Significant portions of these areas will be fenced off in order to aid the recovery of the bog vegetation and hence enhance peat stability. At these sites a number of small grazing exclosures will be set up in order to determine the effect of present grazing systems. The results from these exclosures will be used to devise the appropriate management for such areas. Providing erosion is not severe there are good prospects for vegetation recovery in the short term.

OUTLINE OF THE RESTORATION MEASURES

Many of the sites within the project contain significant areas of intact blanket bog vegetation which occur either in upland areas or in areas where trees have been planted but have not yet achieved a closed canopy. The main plant species to grow in these areas of blanket bog habitat are generally peat mosses (Sphagnum) and various Sphagnum species. These areas of existing bog vegetation are important as they will provide a source of seed for the re-establishment of previously affected areas. The following sections outline the restoration measures to be employed at the various sites. It should be noted that many sites contain a mixture of open and planted areas and will thus require more than one of these restoration measures.

(1) Facilitating the recovery of eroded areas of blanket bog
A number of the sites in Co. Mayo contain substantial tracts of unshaded open blanket bog which have suffered erosion recently due to high stocking levels of sheep. This erosion leads to the presence

of large areas of bare peat and the remaining sparse bog vegetation is often degraded into a species-poor grass heath dominated by mat grass (*Nardus stricta*). This erosion over large areas of blanket bog causes a variety of environmental problems when peat soils near rivers and lakes. Significant portions of these areas will be fenced off in order to aid the recovery of the bog vegetation and hence enhance peat stability. At these sites a number of small grazing exclosures will be set up in order to determine the effect of present grazing systems. The results from these exclosures will be used to devise the appropriate management for such areas. Providing erosion is not severe there are good prospects for vegetation recovery in the short term.

(2) Blocking drains

Any active drains within the site areas will be dammed, by hand, using interlocking plastic piling dams. The material used to construct the dams consists in lengths of just over two metres and can be easily cut to the desired length on site. Although dams composed of plastic piling will be the main method used during the project it is also hoped to block drains with excavated peat and to compare the efficacy of these two methods. The blocking of drains will have the effect of slowing water movement and, over time, this action will facilitate the growth of bog vegetation such as Sphagnum moss and sedges in the drains.

This gradual reduction in the rate of water loss will lead to an elevation of water levels in the surrounding blanket bog areas and hence facilitate bog growth. In order to facilitate bog growth the water table has to be kept within 10cm of the ground surface for at least 90% of the year. This implies that drains to drains have to be placed so that there is one dam for every drop of 10cm along the drain. This necessitates the precise levelling of the ground surface before drains are installed. The

efficacy of these restoration measures will be monitored over the life-time of the project. Vegetation changes will be monitored by means of permanent plots which will be surveyed at regular intervals. The quality and quantity of water in drains which flow out of filled areas is also being monitored at a number of locations. Although the rehabilitation of the blanket bog habitat may take many decades to achieve it is hoped that by the end of this project the re-vegetation of blanket bog vegetation will be well under way at all of the sites.

damming of drains will be carried out to varying extents at all sites within the project will be assessed using a number of Water Level Range Gauges (WLRGs). These WLRGs enable the measurement of water levels within the peat and also indicate the minimum and maximum levels of the water table over a given time period.

(3) Felling of regenerating conifers

If a blanket bog surface is dry it may be prone to colonisation from conifers seedling in from adjacent areas of plantation. In such areas there is generally a low density of naturally small trees present and, as a result, these trees can be removed by manual felling. The prospects for vegetation recovery in these areas are good given the relatively low levels of regeneration and the small size of the trees. The only site within the project in which the removal of regenerating conifers is the main conservation measure is within the Slieve Donard, Co. Offaly.

(4) Felling of planted areas with low, sparse conifers
At most of the sites there are areas of smaller plantations which are small in stature either due to their young age or due to poor growth rates. The trees in these areas will be either felled and left on site or felled and chipped. Where possible, the trunks of these felled/cone trees will be placed in the drains in order to impede water movement. In the chipping process small trees, i.e. 10 metres tall, may be chipped whole however, where the trees are larger, the side branches will be removed and chipped and the trunks left on site. The chippings will be broadcast thinly over the bog surface where they will help prevent drying out of the peat surface and thus facilitate the growth of bog species such as Sphagnum moss. In areas where the trees are too large to chip but too small to be of commercial value, trees will be simply felled to water and left on the surface. The felling of such a large volume of wood and leaving it on the ground

will significantly hinder the re-colonisation of bog vegetation however where such felling is carried out by machine a large proportion of the trees will be placed in a brush cut, then leaving some bare surface in which bog re-colonisation can begin. Due to the fact that the trees in these areas have often not achieved a closed canopy there is usually a high cover of bog vegetation, mostly dominated by either purple moor-grass or bog heather. The prospects for the recovery of bog vegetation in such areas are good however the re-establishment of plant species typical of wet bog may take some considerable time, especially on sloping sites where the blocking of drains may be difficult.

(5) Felling of planted areas with oak, silver-birch conifers
In these areas the timber will be extracted by commercial harvesting methods. Trees will be removed and the ground surface will be covered with a mixture of wide heath mats and areas with a patchy cover of heath left over after harvesting. As there is generally little bog vegetation in areas which have been under tall trees for 30 to 40 years it is anticipated that recovery of bog vegetation will be slow, especially in the short term. The overall prospects for vegetation recovery will probably be best in the flatter areas which will be easier to re-vegetate via drain-blocking.

III

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Blanket Bog in Ireland

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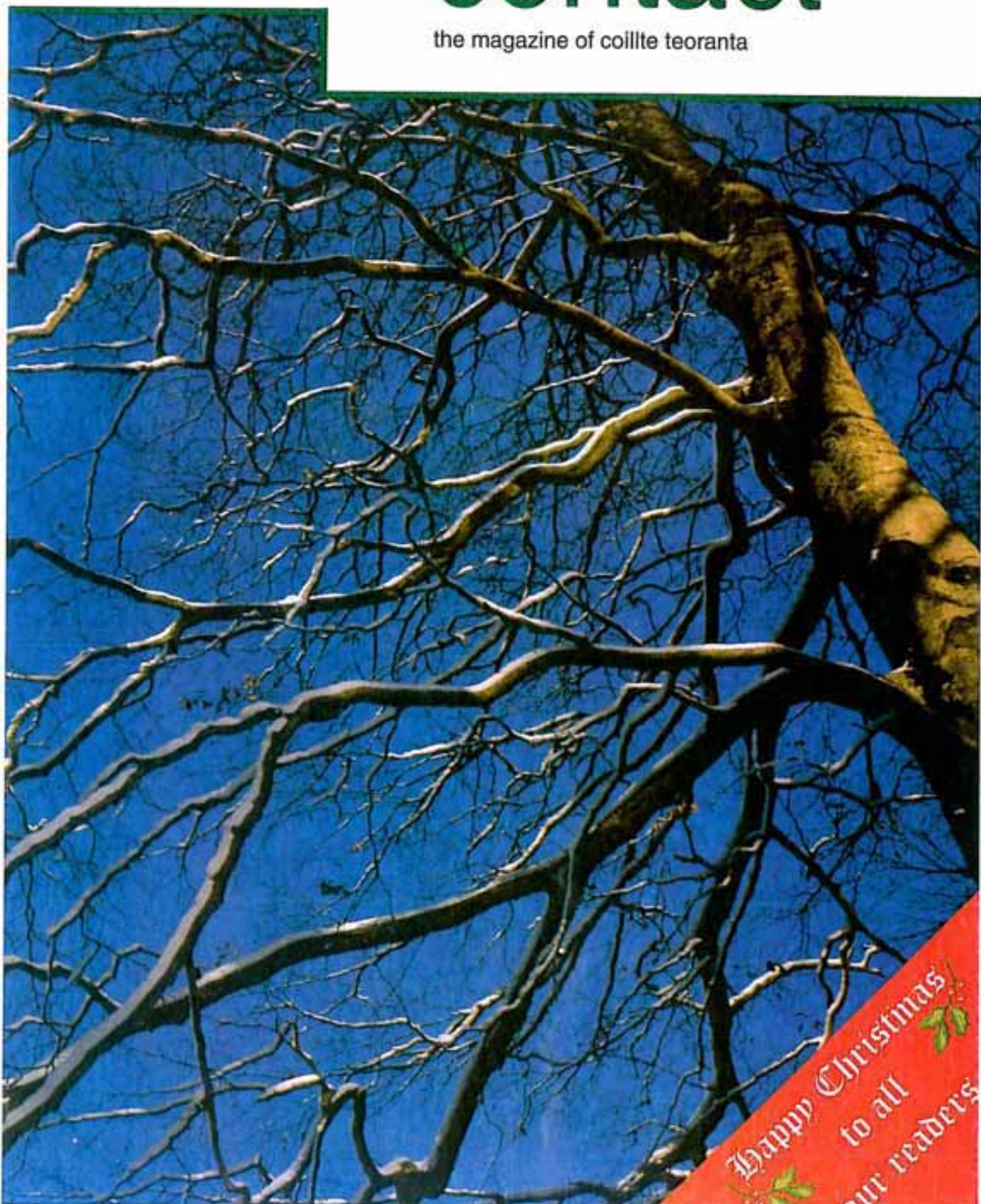
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coillte contact

*C/Displace Water cell
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volume 15, number 4, 2003

the magazine of coillte teoranta



Happy Christmas
to all
our readers

UK Forestry Commission visit Abbeyleix

Thirteen UK Forestry Commission Researchers arrived in Ireland on Tuesday Nov. 4th and travelled to Abbeyleix Manor to commence their Annual two-day meeting. Their reason for coming to Ireland was to get away together and see something of what others were doing.

These research staff are based throughout England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and come together as a group once a year. The group is mixed in terms of the fields of interest that they represent. On Wednesday 5th, they were joined by a Coillte staff, for an indoor presentation followed by a field trip to the Slieve Blooms. The presentations were made by John Prior, John Lyons and Michael Keane. John Prior gave an overview of Coillte and the District that they were about to visit, and a presentation on the LIFE Project. Michael Keane gave a presentation on the establishment process, including the progress on mechanical planting. Finally, John Lyons discussed Soft Ground Harvesting, focussing on the results of the ECOWOOD Project (See Summer 2001 edition of Coillte Contact for more information on this project), followed by a presentation on the current Research and Development work in the Harvesting and Haulage process. Some of their members also made short presentations.

Local District staff helped out in the afternoon on the field visits, which included visits to:

- Glendine Forest Property, the very impressive stand of mature Sitka Spruce in the Slieve Blooms. Unfortunately the weather was not so kind, but nevertheless our visitors seemed to enjoy their picnic lunch in the forest. The main topic for discussion here was Continuous Forest Cover. Coillte's progress was presented by Padraig O'Tuama. Pat O'Brien also gave some background information on Glendine.
- The LIFE Project site in the Slieve Blooms, where the newly-constructed and very impressive board walk allowed our visitors to see the methods of drain blocking that forms part of the project work. This stop was hosted by Richard Jack, who mixed facts with some



Researchers from the UK Forestry Commission and Coillte Staff admiring the new board walk at the LIFE Project Site in the Slieve Blooms

local folklore, which the visitors enjoyed, and

- An establishment site near Cionaslee village, which was led by Michael Keane and by Diarmuid O'Riordan. An interesting debate took place on site as to the techniques in use and alternatives in use in the UK.

The group finally returned to the hotel for a closing session. Colin Saunders spoke of the helicopter extraction project carried out in Scotland. There was various interesting pieces of information exchanged throughout the day, such as the 'riddle bucket' that they use on excavators and increases productivity on particular sites. One

of their harvesting studies showed the beneficial effects on machine floatation in peatlands of cutting tree tops into shorter sections rather than dropping them in one piece. This also has advantages when preparing sites for reforestation. In the area of Continuous Forest Cover there was quite an interest on both sides in what was happening since this area is quite new to all concerned.

The group were happy with their experiences and exchanges during their visit. Thanks again to those who helped out at short notice on the day.

John Lyons

Board of Directors walk the boardwalk

Coillte's Board of Directors were the first visitors to the new Blanket Bog Restoration boardwalk and demonstration site in the Slieve Blooms as part of the October Board Meeting.

Coillte recently built its first boardwalk, at the LIFE-Nature

demonstration site at Glendine, near Cionaslee in the Slieve Bloom Mountains. This is the first of five boardwalks to be built over the duration of the project. The purpose of the demonstration sites will be to increase public awareness of the LIFE Nature Project and its benefits. The



Members of the Coillte Board of Directors standing on the new Board Walk at Glendine.

boardwalk, which was built by Coillte local staff Jimmy Conroy and Paddy Blake using local untreated larch timber, will facilitate visitor access without having any negative impact on the sensitive Blanket Bog habitat. A particular focus is to encourage local communities to benefit from the project by visiting and enjoying the bogs, their plants and wildlife.

Interpretation panels also summarising the LIFE project generally and particularly the work carried out on the demonstration site, will be erected for visitor information.

It is planned to have many open days at the site, featuring guided walks, and targeting mainly school children and other interested stakeholders. Participants will learn about the objectives, actions and expected results of the LIFE project, and will receive a project information pack.

Further boardwalks will be built over the next year on demonstration sites at Dromalohurt in Kerry, Emlaghdauroe near Clifden, Eskeragh near Crossmolina and Croaghonagh in Donegal.

John Snell
Kevin Donnellan

National Ploughing Championships 2003 a success

The National Ploughing Championships for 2003 were held in Ballinabrackey in Co. Meath. Despite the cutbacks which hit the forestry sector this year, the industry was well represented with the Forest Service, Green Belt and the Independent Forestry Contractors all present.

Coillte was once again the most popular of the forestry stands with a queue every morning for the free saplings. Demand for the trees was so strong that by the last day we had to seek assistance from all staff on the stand to control the crowds!

Coillte's stand was impressive with OSB flooring and wall-to-wall images. The stand was also landscaped using products from Dundrum sawmills, such as fencing, gates and furniture. The interest in our various businesses was very good, including lots of enquires from landowners about Farm Partnerships and Private Planting and the new Forestry Management

Scheme. This indicated that the cutbacks had not discouraged landowners from considering forestry as an option, which is good news for the industry.

Public Relations Division would like to sincerely thank all those involved, especially Angela Wallace, Matt Leoge and Tony Collins who did fantastic work on the ground before, during and after the event. We would also like to thank all who worked on the stand over the three days.

Clíodhna Parker



Matt Leoge and Clíodhna Parker take a breather



Michael Davoren discussing the new Farm Management Service at the Ploughing Championships



Outside the Coillte Marquee



The crowds arrive to receive their free trees

ROSCREA PEOPLE

Vol. 19 December 2003

€6



Roscrea Host Saudi Arabia Special Olympics Team

RESTORING ACTIVE BLANKET BOG IN THE SLIEVE BLOOM MOUNTAINS

coillte
The Forestry People

A nature conservation project jointly funded by Coillte and DG Environment under the EU Life Nature Programme, is focusing on the restoration of a total of 252 hectares on eight sites owned by Coillte, within the candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in the Slieve Bloom mountains, Co. Laois. These sites are part of Coillte's overall plans to restore 1,212 ha of blanket bog nationally. Other sites are located mainly along the western seaboard.

Consultation has taken place and agreement has been reached with the National Parks and Wildlife Service on the work which is planned for the Slieve Bloom Mountains. This work forms part of the draft management plan for the area. The upland blanket bog of the Slieve Blooms is considered to be one of the best and least disturbed mountain blanket peat systems in the country. The vegetation consists of a deep, spongy mat of *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, and lichens. Higher plant flora is dominated by ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and deer sedge (*Trichophorum cespitosum*). An unusual feature is the abundance of cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*).



The main impact of afforestation on the upland habitats is the regeneration of Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine onto intact bog and heath from adjacent forestry plantations. Some drainage work has also lowered the natural water level of these bogs. This project on the Slieve Bloom mountains focuses on removal of regenerating conifers from the bog and drain blocking to rewet the bog which will lead to restoring the wetland ecology.

A boardwalk has been constructed at Glendine, near Clonaslee. Glendine has been designated as a demonstration site which will be the focus of a public awareness programme during the project. The boardwalk which was built by local Coillte staff, Jimmy Conroy and Paddy Blake, using untreated larch timber, will facilitate visitor access without having any negative impact on the Blanket Bog habitat. A particular focus is to encourage local communities to benefit from the project by visiting and enjoying the bogs, their plants and wildlife. Interpretation panels with information on flora, fauna and also summarising the work carried out on the project, will be erected for visitors also. It is planned to have open days, featuring guided walks over the duration of the project targeting mainly school children and other interested stakeholders. Participants will learn about the objectives, actions and expected results of the LIFE project - and will receive a project information pack.

A website giving details of the project nationally can be accessed at www.irishbogrestorationproject.ie.

For further information contact:

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Kevin Donnellan, Project Manager, Coillte, Castle Avenue, Portumna, Co. Galway. Telephone - 090/9741683; e-mail: Kevin.donnellan@coillte.ie

IRELAND'S BEST KEPT SECRET



A venerable ash, visible from the N7 beyond Inane.

We all can enjoy the treasures of Ireland's best kept secret - 1.1 million acres of forest land, all open to the public to enjoy. Coillte has dedicated recreational areas, picnic sites, guided trails, even children's playgrounds. Witness wildlife in its natural habitat, discover an abundance of flora and fauna, and scenery that will take your breath away.

Golden Grove

Here in Roscrea Coillte has these treasures on our doorstep in the magical woodland of Golden Grove. This open forest of beech and Scot's pine with some larch on a limestone

hum are seasonal delights at any time of year. But in May, when the bluebells carpet the ground the effect is exhilarating. Some vintage oaks and Monterey pine survive from the former estate, known in medieval times as Knocknamease, the *hill of the dishes*.

Near Gloster lies another of Coillte's public forests, Lough Roe, this time the lake adds another dimension. And, of course, the valleys and wooded uplands of Slieve Bloom provide endless avenues of exploration.



Beechwood in Golden Grove in May.



Bog Rehabilitation Planned For Slieve Blooms

By Derek Fanning

The rehabilitation of a large section of the Slieve Bloom Mountains is currently being planned.

This re-vegetation is welcome news and will take place over 252 hectares of blanket bog. A restored, undrained bog can be a wonderful place, particularly during the Summer.

The different sites that will be restored will be at Carranabawn; Glendaneorgan; Clashree; Glenletter; Johnsborough; Crumlin; Cum-

ber.

Speaking to the Midland Tribune Mr Kevin Donnellan of Coillte commented that planning work had commenced on the project.

This entails consultation with all the relevant bodies, for example Duchas. All the areas concerned are Special Areas of Conservation and Duchas would have to be consulted before work began.

75% of the restoration funds is being provided by the EU

Continued On Page 6

Bog Rehabilitation Planned For Slieve Blooms

(from Page 1)

and Coillte will supply the remaining 25%. It is Coillte who will carry out the actual work, physical re-vegetation of the bog lands.

Coillte are restoring 1220 hectares of peatland habitat / blanket bog throughout the country under an EU funded LIFE Nature project. Most of the restoration is taking place on the west coast. The only two inland locations are in County Clare and in the Slieve Blooms.

The measures to be under-

taken are: control of over grazing (on some sites grazing is presently ongoing - Coillte will fence it off and stop the grazing); the removal of coniferous plantations that are growing on these sites; the blocking of drains to re-wet these areas (this will regenerate the bog - eg sphagnum moss and other plants will begin to grow again. Undrained Bog is something like 90% water).

They will also have a number of demonstration sites (there will be five in the country.) One of these will be in the Slieve

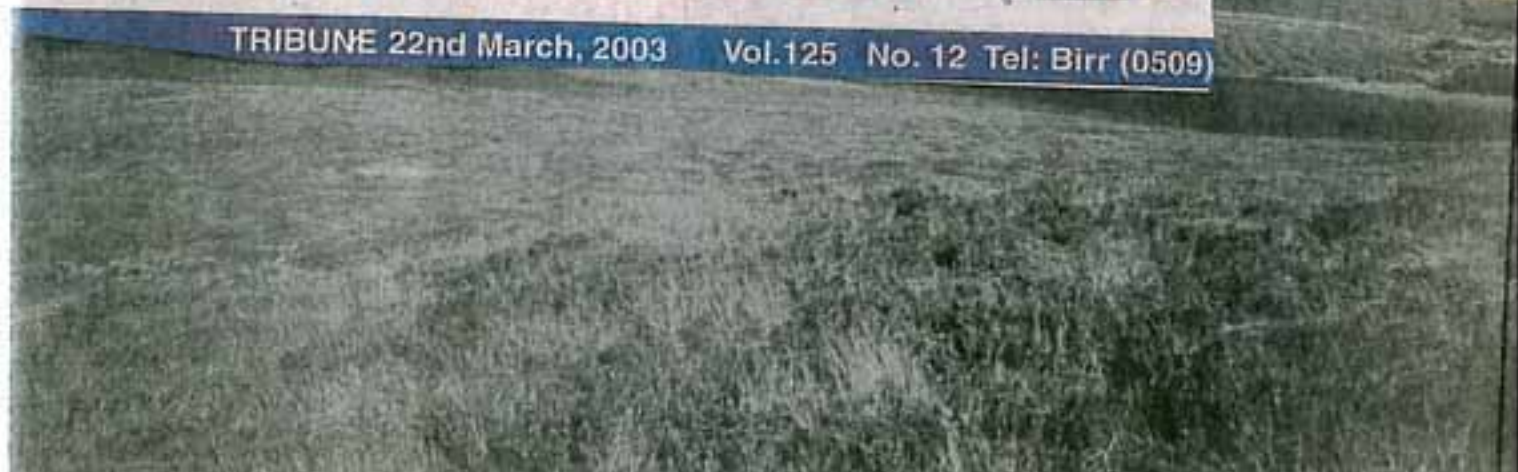
Blooms. The idea here will be to have open days and school days. We will be focusing especially on children and stakeholders - i.e. anyone with an interest in our operation, eg a local community group.

It will be a four year project. The blanket bog is considered a protected habitat under the EU habitat directive, and therefore these areas have been given the appellation of Special Areas of Conservation. The EU considers it to be one of the most important habitats for conserva-

THE
WIDELAND

THE MIDLAND NEWS

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A view on the top of the Slieve Bloom mountains looking towards Ard Erin.

Slieve Bloom Restoration Is Step In Right Direction

By Derek Fanning

The proposed restoration of a large section of the Slieve Bloom mountains is very much a step in the right direction. Since 1911 this upland area has been blighted by an economically driven process of afforestation. Over the years lovers of the hills watched helplessly and in despair as beautiful vistas disappeared behind a shield of sitka spruce.

These forests were planted so sensibly that they were inimical to both bird and plant, and indeed to man; trying to progress through the trees is an adventurous experience.

It was yet another example of filthy lucre winning out over spirituality, of the wrong path being taken instead of the right one. I think that now the Slieve Blooms possess the highest concentration of sitka spruce plantations in any upland area in Ireland.

Another source of criticism was that these conifers weren't even indigenous to the region. The broadleaf tree was the natural inhabitant of this delightful upland swelling straddling the border of Laois and Offaly. An oak wood is a place of light and

happiness, strewn with delightful flowers in Spring, and replete with bird song. The sitka spruce woodland is dark, murky and devoid of song or plantlife. It is the dwelling place of malignant spirits.

Now, in pragmatic terms, Coillte Teomanta (the Irish Forestry Board) is not going to suddenly level its conifer forests and replace them with broadleaf trees. The former are much more economically viable than the latter. And to a certain extent one can certainly empathise with Coillte on this.

At present what the hill lover can most realistically look forward to is initiatives covering relatively small areas. Coillte's current project to restore sections of blanket bog is one such initiative.

According to Caroline White of Coillte: "The peatlands of the West of Ireland are internationally among the most important intact areas of active blanket bog found in Europe."

Since 1997 approximately 135,139 hectares of active blanket bog have been proposed as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) under the

Habitats Directive. These proposed SAC blanket bog sites are located mainly in the Atlantic Seaboard counties of Ireland, especially County Mayo.

Ms White remarked that the project is aiming at bogland restoration on 14, unplanted, or partially or wholly afforested sites covering 1212.3 hectares within candidate SACs. She said that Coillte in accordance with the principles of sustainable forest management, had divided its estate into environmental forest management units (FMUs).

"The project area is on land owned and managed by Coillte in seven FMUs. Special emphasis will be placed on sites in the North Mayo Forest Management Unit, where the full range of blanket bog types occur from lowland to mountain blanket bog (involving sensitive river catchments).

"In other FMUs the sites are representative of afforested peatlands around the country. Five of these sites have been selected as project demonstration sites, and these will be the focus of a public awareness programme over a four year period. One of these demonstration sites will be in the Slieve Blooms. The idea here will be to have open days and school

days. We will be focussing especially on children and stakeholders - i.e. anyone with an interest in our operation, eg. a local community group."

Ms White added that in the past the blanket boglands of Ireland were extensively afforested, with unfenced open areas often heavily overgrazed. "This has resulted in the degradation and drying out of the habitat. These threats are the focus of this project. The problems, which need to be addressed, are:

- * Uncontrolled areas on the open bogs have been overgrazed.

- * Forestry drains on the open bogs have lowered the natural water levels.

- * Afforestation, including drainage, has reduced the area of blanket bog.

- * Forest plantations are regenerating onto the open bog SACs.

She said that this project will reverse these processes and over time will create a high quality area of active blanket bog by:

- * Fencing to gain control of 718.6 hectares of open bog areas.

- * Ditch blocking to restore the integrity of the bog hydrological systems.

- * Deforestation of some 49 hectares to enlarge the blanket bog area.

- * Removal of naturally regenerated trees from the open bog.

This last point refers to growth of small conifers adjacent to plantations. Sids have been blown over from the peatstacks and afforestation is planned to cover more ground than originally planned.

The bog restoration strategy utilised will be the same as those employed in the U.S. where they have worked extremely effectively.

The bog rehabilitation in Slieve Blooms will be planned over 252 hectares of blanket bog. The different sites that will be restored will be Garmusbawn; Glenbereagh; Clashroe; Galetta; Johnsborough; Cruinn; Cumber.

According to Kevin Donnellan of Coillte, planning work has commenced on the project. This entails consultation with all the relevant bodies, for example DAF.

75% of the restoration funding is being provided by the EU and Coillte will supply the remaining 25%. It is Coillte who will carry out the actual physical revitalisation of the bog lands.

The Sligo Champion

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Coillte brings 'life' to the bogs

COILLTE, the Irish Forestry Board, have recently undertaken a major bog restoration project to restore 14 bogland sites, most of which are located in the West of Ireland. These bogs are internationally renowned to be among the most important intact areas of active blanket bog found in Europe. One such site is located at the western edge of one of the Ox Mountains Bogs in Co. Sligo

either unplanted, partially planted or wholly afforested.

The aim of this project is to reverse these problems, and over time, to create a high quality area of active blanket bog by fencing to prevent grazing, ditch-blocking to increase water levels, restoration of the remaining areas to enlarge the area of blanket bog, and removal of naturally regenerating trees from the open bogs.

This bog restoration project is one of many initiatives that Coillte is currently undertaking as part of its Nature Conservation Programme which was initiated in 1998. Coillte is committed to the sustainable management of its forests, demonstrated by the achievement of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification in 2001. For more information log on to www.coillte.ie.

which comprise an extensive area of blanket bog, including very good examples of lowland, upland and mountain blanket bog. This site Sessuegillyroy is being managed by local Coillte Estate Manager - Mr. Martin Raine.

The project, which is jointly funded by Coillte and DG-Environment under the EU Life-Nature Programme, aims to restore the 14 bogland sites which are currently

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Coillte Brings "LIFE" to the Bogs

Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board have recently undertaken a major bog restoration project to restore 14 bogland sites, some of which are located in Donegal.

These bogs are internationally renowned to be among the most important intact areas of active blanket bog found in Europe.

Two of the sites at Croaghonagh are located in the Barnesmore Gap and Carrick Barr which lies just west of Lough Golagh.

These sites are being managed by Mr. Aiden O'Donnell, local Coillte Estate Manager.

The project, which is jointly funded by Coillte and DG-Environment under the EU Life-Nature Programme, aims to restore the 14 bogland sites which are currently either unplanted, partially planted or wholly afforested. These sites, which cover over 1,200 hectares within candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's), have been seriously damaged due to problems such as overgrazing and reduced water levels.

The aim of this project is to reverse these problems, and over time, to create a high quality area of active blanket bog by fencing to prevent grazing, ditch-blocking to increase water levels, restoration of the remaining areas to enlarge the area of blanket bog, and removal of naturally regenerating trees from the open bogs.

Newsbriefs

Coillte aims to bring 'life' back to bog at Ox Mountains

SLIGO: A COILLTE project is focusing its attention on restoring a bog in County Sligo.

Sessuegilroy, a bog at the foot of the Ox Mountains, is to benefit from the project, managed by Coillte's estate manager, Martin Ruane.

Sligo has become part of the nationwide campaign to restore 14 bogs, most of which are located in the west of Ireland.

Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, will restore the bog at Sessuegilroy, which comprises an extensive area of blanket bog, lowland and mountain bog.

Martin Ruane said: "These bogs are internationally renowned to be among the most important intact areas of active blanket bog found in Europe."

The project is jointly funded by Coillte under the EU Life-Nature Programme, and aims to restore the 14 bogland sites which are currently either unplanted, partially planted or wholly afforested.

These sites cover over 1,200 hectares within candidate Special Areas of Conservation, which have been seriously damaged due to problems such as overgrazing and reduced water levels.

"The aim of this project is to reverse these problems. Over time we want to create a high quality area of active blanket bog by fencing to prevent grazing, and ditch-blocking to increase water levels."

This bog restoration project is one of the initiatives Coillte is currently undertaking as part of its Nature Conservation Programme which was initiated in 1998.

Coillte plans to bring life to bogs of Mayo

COILLTE, the Irish Forestry Board has undertaken a major bog restoration project to restore 14 bogland sites, most of which are located in the West of Ireland.

Sites in Mayo are located at Bellaveeny, Eskeragh, Owenirragh, Glencullin Lower and Shanvolahan, and are being managed by the local Coillte Estate Managers, Seamus O'Connor and Joe McEvey.

These bogs are internationally renowned to be among the most important intact areas of active blanket bog found in Europe. The project, which is jointly funded by Coillte and DG-Environment under the EU Life-Nature Programme, aims to restore the 14 bogland sites which are currently

either unplanted, partially planted or wholly afforested. These sites, which cover over 1,200 hectares within candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's), have been seriously damaged due to grazing and reduced water levels. The aim of this project is to reverse these prob-

lems, and over time, to create a high quality area of active blanket bog by fencing to prevent grazing, ditch-blocking to increase water levels, restoration of the remaining areas to enlarge the area of blanket bog, and removal of naturally regenerating trees from the open bogs. This bog restoration project is one of many initiatives that Coillte is currently undertaking as part of its Nature Conservation Programme which was initiated in 1996. Coillte is committed to the sustainable management of its forests, demonstrated by the achievement of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification in 2001. For more information log on to www.coillte.ie.



Golden plover

EDITORIAL. WP 16/7/03
New life for old bogs

ISSUES arise and will continue to arise over Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). More recently farmers are finding that land reclaimed over the years through sheer dint of hard work and considerable expense now features in retrospective EU mapping exercises.

In some cases, where, for example, farmers may have worked hard to reclaim say fifty acres over the years, they would be left with perhaps ten or twenty acres of good land were they now to follow SAC lines drawn on maps by bureaucrats not aware of the work carried out to ensure some measure of viability. Such instances will be resolved as they emerge and the facts are brought to the attention of the powers that be.

SACs are, of course, important and it is good to see cases where preservation and restoration measures are working smoothly. A case in point is the work being carried out by Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, which is restoring 14 bogland sites, most of which are located in the West of Ireland. Sites in Mayo are located at Bellaveeny, Eskeragh, Owenirragh, Glencullin Lower and Shanvolahan, and are being managed by the local Coillte Estate Managers. These bogs are internationally recognised to be among the most important intact areas of active blanket bog found in Europe.

These bogland sites are either unplanted, partially planted or wholly afforested and cover over 1,200 hectares within candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The intention is to reverse problems created by overgrazing and reduced water level, and to create a high quality area of active blanket bog that will be enjoyed and admired by future generations. A very commendable goal indeed.

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Coillte brings life to the bogs

COILLTE, the Irish Forestry Board, have recently undertaken a major bog restoration project, to restore 14 bogland sites, most of which are located in the West of Ireland. These bogs are internationally acknowledged to be among the most important intact areas of active blanket bog found in Europe. One such site is Pollagoona Bog, a small blanket bog, situated at an altitude of 153m, in a shallow saddle on gently sloping terrain within the Slieve Aughty uplands in Clare. This site is being managed by local Coillte estate manager, Michael Fogarty.

The project, which is jointly funded by Coillte and DG-Environment under the EU Life-Nature Programme, aims to restore the 14 bogland sites which are currently either unplanted, partially planted or wholly

afforested. These sites, which cover over 1,200 hectares within candidate Special Areas of Conservation, have been seriously damaged due to problems such as overgrazing and reduced water levels.

The aim of this project is to reverse these problems, and over time, to create a high quality area of active blanket bog, by fencing to prevent grazing, ditch-blocking to increase water levels, restoration of the remaining areas to enlarge the area of blanket bog, and removal of naturally regenerating trees from the open bogs.

This bog restoration project is one of many initiatives that Coillte is currently undertaking as part of its Nature Conservation Programme which was initiated in 1998. Coillte is committed to the sustainable management of its forests, demonstrated by the achievement of Forest Stewardship Council certification in 2001.

boasts some handy links

Browsing the web can be cool. As long as you know where to find what you're looking for. Often however with websites growing up overnight, and more importantly dying out just as quick, the maze of information and content can be hard for even the most computer literate of surfers.

While web search engines such as yahoo and google can be handy for specific searches, often when you're looking for more diffuse information on a variety of topics which interest you, your best bet is to find a portal site. One such site getting a lot of internet traffic recently is www.Gradu8.com, a site designed with second level students in mind.

The site features section on Careers, Cartoons, Computers, Driving Skills, Education, E-Mail, Environment, Faith, Fun, Games, Greetings, Health & Fitness, Humour, International, Mobile Phones, Money Matters, Movies, Music, News & Weather, Panoramas, Pets, Primary, Radio, Regional, Sci-Fi, Shopping, Sport Television, Third Level, Travel, Treasure Trail, Youth Zone, and Webcams. It is a veritable a-z of what might interest your average adolescent.

They also have handy featured links which direct you to such places as Christmas Traditions across the globe, or John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Assassinated 40 years ago, or Visit the Official Ladies Gaelic Football Website or TRANSITION YEAR: What every Student should know, all other websites of interests.

Gradu8.net is not so much in and of itself a brilliant website, as that it is connected to a large amount of websites which provide very useful information.

However it's major claim to fame at the moment would probably be the weekly treasure hunt online competition which is giving away over 100,000 euros worth of prizes around the country for the next nine weeks and for some considerable time more.

St. Mel's College have benefited 500 euro worth of computer equipment because of the general knowledge of one of their students, who himself has earned a 500 euro cash prize on the Gradu8.net site.

Patrick Shannon of College Park, Longford's name was announced on the Rick O'Shea fm radio show in recent weeks, and he was previously featured in the front page of the Longford Leader (one is unsure of which is the better prize - Ed) for the win.

Patrick, son of Betty and Martin Francis Shannon of College Park registered with the website and answered ten general knowledge multiple choice questions.

The competition is run with sponsorship from a sizeable amount of partners, including 2FM, Irish Daily Star, Dell, The Data Protec-



St. Mel's student Patrick Shannon of College Park with Principal of St. Mel's School Denis Glennon after news that Patrick had won 500 euro cash for himself, and 500 euro worth of Dell computer equipment.

The front page of www.gradu8.net which is a useful resource for students throughout secondary level.

Water Safety Ireland, Foras na Gaeilge, and OASIS - a government information website.

Recently the school was contacted and told that one of their students had won a prize, and to listen into 2FM for further details. While the 500 euro worth of equipment will fit the bill nicely for the school who have a very proactive computer skills programme in place, the 500 euro cash prize for Patrick will also not go to waste as he is putting it towards a ticket for a trip to South Africa at Easter time.

The computer equipment is by Dell, but the cash prize is sponsored by the Office of the Ombudsman, currently occupied by one Emily O'Reilly. The whole prize win comes as something of a vindication perhaps, as Patrick explained to the Leader at the time: "My parents are very happy about it. I suppose they always thought I was just wasting my time online, but now they know I wasn't".

The site has many sponsors and partners some of which are: the BMW Regional Assembly, Castlebar Credit Union, Catholic Ireland, Coillte's Blanket Bog Restoration Project, Combat Poverty, Connaught Telegraph, Diocese of Achonry, Diocese of Raphoe, Donegal County Council, European Parliament Office, Foras na Gaeilge, Galway County Council, Galway Road Safety, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Irish Water Safety, Leitrim County Council, Money Advice and Budgeting Service, Mayo County Council, Mayo Fire Service, Oasis (Comhairle), Mayo Library Service, Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, Office of the Ombudsman, Planet (The network of the 38 area based partnership companies), Roscommon County Council, Tuam Archdiocese, and the Western Development Commission.

tion Commissioner, The EU Commission, The European Parliament in Ireland, Office of the Ombudsman, Coillte, Mayo County Council, BMW Regional Authority, Combat Poverty, Irish